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BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
STAFFING AND OPERATIONS
SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON, CHAIRMAN
FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1963, 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate greatly this opportunity to appear before this Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations.

Three years ago, I was given a similar opportunity to discuss organizing for national security. Today your concern, as I understand it, is to examine staffing and operations.

In my earlier testimony, I stated that "good organizational machinery can never substitute for good people." I believe, therefore, that your present inquiry is directed at a most vital consideration in the development of effective government. I use the word "effective" government, rather than "efficient," as our concept of checks and balances in government precludes achieving "efficiency" as such.

The word "operations" as applied to the Department of State connotes a different process than in some other Departments of government, such as Defense. It does not mean the movement of men and materiel. It does mean the movement of ideas. Policy decisions are made by the President and the Secretary of State. These policies must be interpreted and carried out by staff at different levels in the State Department and in the field.

The machinery

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The machinery of the State Department is geared to carry out two basic functions: first, to assist the Secretary of State, and through him, the President, by providing information and opinions on which they can form their judgments. The second function is to carry out the policy decisions that are reached.

In organizing and staffing the State Department and missions overseas, these two functions should be borne in mind. In some cases, certain officers may be engaged in only one of these two functions, but in many cases they are engaged in both. The first function requires careful assembly and reporting of all obtainable information, incisive analysis and judgment on its relevance to United States interests and objectives. The second function requires not only decisive action, but astute judgment in interpreting established policy to particular situations. In addition, in the field initiative is essential in relating policy to unexpected developments.

The relationship of the Secretary of State with the President is highly personal. In my previous testimony I stated, "Each President has his own work style and each will therefore wish to organize his office differently." This of course has an effect not only on the manner in which the Secretary of State functions, but to some extent on the Department itself.

I have observed this at close range under three Presidents, and from the sidelines under a fourth. The State Department must be sufficiently flexible to be responsive to the individual requirements of the President. On the other hand, the State Department must bear responsibility for dealing with our varied national interests in all parts of the world and on many subjects on which the White House may not have the time or the inclination to become involved. The

President's

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President's policies, of course, affect not only one Department, but all agencies of government and the interconnection between them. Much of the difficulty in interdepartmental controversies results, I believe, from insensitivity in understanding the policies laid down by the President. The work of the Cabinet, the National Security Council, and other groups at which he is present, are but one mode of communication between the President and those who operate the machinery of government. His public statements are often as much directed to Government employees as to the American public. Officers at every level would do well, I believe, to recognize this characteristic of our American democratic process. Failure to listen, or inability to understand the nuances and purpose of his public statements impede the conduct of government business and cooperation between the agencies of government. A requirement of public office should be a careful reading of or listening to the President's statements, speeches and press conferences.

I might add that a careful reading of the newspapers should be a requirement in obtaining a familiarity with, among other things, the expressions of members of the Congress. This is particularly true of the State Department. A man cannot function adequately in foreign policy unless he knows his country well.

The Secretary of State's first responsibility is to advise the President.

In addition, he is the senior member of the Cabinet and has responsibility for all actions of government that affect foreign policy. The most intimate of his relations with other cabinet officers is with the Secretary of Defense. In fact, it is important for the Department of State and the Department of Defense to work closely together with freedom of interchange of information and judgment at all levels.

It should be

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It should be his privilege, but not his obligation, to comment on policies and actions of all other agencies of government that affect our foreign interests.

He is as well the principal United States negotiator with foreign states, individually and multilaterally.

He is responsible for keeping the Congress informed on international developments and testifies on relevant legislative procedures.

Furthermore, he plays a major role in informing the American public regarding all aspects of foreign affairs. No foreign policy can be effective without wide public support.

Additional to these responsibilities, he is the chief executive of the State Department, charged with the functioning of its wide organization in Washington and in all parts of the world.

Obviously, to carry such burdens he requires experienced and capable lieutenants. The Under Secretary is his alter ego. The Assistant Secretaries should be men capable of making decisions in their areas of responsibility within the policy guidance provided by the Secretary. The qualifications needed by Assistant Secretaries sometimes can be found in a Foreign Service Officer, and sometimes from capable executives from outside. In my judgment, it is well to keep a reasonable balance between the two. In my experience, I have found it is well to draw from both backgrounds for these senior positions in the State Department

Regardless of the talent brought in on top, the backbone of the State Department is the Foreign Service. I have testified before of my great respect for our Foreign Service Officers. It includes men and women of great talent and sound judgment, based on wide experience.

Obviously,

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Obviously, the Foreign Service is not and never can be perfect. It can and I believe it must be improved. The process of recruitment and selection in the junior grades is excellent. Also, I have sympathy for the process of lateral entry of special talent in the middle and upper grades. The procedures for promotion have been most conscientiously laid down, but from my experience I do not believe that the result of these procedures is good enough.

Men with a spark and independence of expression are at times held down, whereas caution is rewarded. But I believe it is certainly better today than it has been in the past.

And the difficulties do not lie only within the Department. The Foreign Service Officer has been subjected to the most unfair criticism. I have seen men's careers set back and in fact busted because they held the right views at the wrong time, or for reporting accurately facts which were not popular at the time.

Furthermore, the job of a Foreign Service Officer throughout his career is to report the facts as he sees them and as he interprets them. If to survive, it is necessary to be always right, then the Officer must always play safe. A man should be judged on his initiative, courage and insight. I underline the testimony I have previously given:

"...an efficient career service can be developed only if loyalty is given to the members of that service. ...Nor can we expect officials to act boldly and courageously, and to advocate some momentarily unpopular policy if necessary, if mistakes or differences of honest judgment can end in the destruction of their careers. If this continues to happen, we will inevitably end up with a 'do little,' 'play safe,'

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safe,' civil service, inadequate for the needs of our country at this time."

Loyalty begets loyalty, and I urge this Subcommittee to recommend in the strongest terms that our government in all of its branches be loyal to the men and women who have devotedly served their country.

Obviously, the incompetent must be dropped out. The present system provides for what is euphemistically called, "selection out." Here again, the application of the system can be more fairly applied.

Parallel to the Department of State, there are activities in the foreign field of great importance to foreign policy carried out by the United States Information Agency, the Agency for International Development, together with our military assistance programs. It has become increasingly evident that all of the activities abroad must be coordinated.

The concept of the country team was reaffirmed and clarified on May 29, 1961, when President Kennedy wrote letters to each of our Ambassadors, instructing him to coordinate all of our government's activities in the country to which he is accredited. There can be no doubt about the wisdom of this system. This responsibility requires Ambassadors to have an intimate knowledge of the various activities of our government abroad, as well as unusual qualities of leadership to bring together in many cases strong personalities dedicated to their particular functions.

These new responsibilities underline the importance of the opportunities for training which are given to Foreign Service Officers in the Foreign Service Institute and the various service colleges which broaden the knowledge and understanding of all of our services.

About

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About two-thirds of our Ambassadors are now drawn from the Foreign Service. The other third is drawn from men of wide experience in many fields of activity. I am strongly of the opinion that these men contribute greatly to the effectiveness of our representation abroad. The Ambassador from the Foreign Service and those drawn from outside government each contributes and sets a standard for the other. The non-career Ambassador is apt to bring a freshness of approach, a rather more vivid language in his reporting, which is a relief to read after the more stereotyped form. But what is more, since he is not dependent upon his job, he is inclined to be more independent in expressing his judgments. However, as he is not afraid of being fired, he is at times too independent, but this is a quality which encourages others to a reasonable balance.

In spite of the speed of communication, I believe our Ambassadors today have more important functions than ever. The relationships which he builds with other governments and the manner in which he carries out instructions, can play a vital role in the development of our relations with the country to which he is accredited.

The Department has been criticized at times for permitting Desk Officers, who are usually much junior to the Ambassadors, to issue specific instructions. I believe the practice of issuing instructions should be minimized. Our Ambassadors in the field should be given guidance in the manner in which a subject should be discussed, but not specific instructions of language to be used. I have found that this system utilizes to better advantage the talents in our Embassies.

Furthermore,

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Furthermore, since the end of the war, our role in the world has completely changed. We are no longer observers in the world scene. Events in almost all parts of the world now affect us, and therefore we have become participants in much that is going on. Our Ambassador and his staff have therefore to understand the nature of their responsibilities and be prepared to protect our interests in whatever the developments may be.

One matter of increasing importance is the need for speed in our communications system. It is now quite good, but needs improvement. I suggest this Subcommittee give consideration to the manner in which this can be done. In this nuclear age, we cannot afford to run the risk of delay, either in information to Washington, or in word to the field. On the other hand, I find that we have not become accustomed to the speed of jet transportation, for too much goes by telegram rather than by air pouch. One reason is that it has become a habit for senior officers to read only telegrams, leaving airgrams to the Desk Officers. In FE, we tried this past month an experiment with four Embassies. In these cases, experience has shown that the average time of the pouch is approximately two days. We instructed these Embassies to send only priority messages by telegram, and the balance in airgrams marked for expeditious handling. I assured the Embassies that we would give equal attention to these airgrams as we previously had given to telegrams. It is too early to report meaningfully on the results, but I am inclined to believe that the volume of telegrams can be reduced. And, incidentally, it is a relief and saves a lot of time for the receiving officer to read the plain language of airgrams, rather than the artificial brevity of cables.

Our missions

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Our missions abroad are apt to feel that they will be judged by the mass of telegrams, airgrams and other communications sent back to Washington. But volume is no substitute for quality. In my opinion, the present bulk of reporting should be reduced. A good report will be brief, at least in summary, and contain incisive judgments and wise interpretations. It is an abdication of responsibility when a mission passes back to intelligence analysts and to Desk Officers in Washington the task of finding meaning in the raw material.

In this jet age, there should be more travel from Washington to the field, and from the field to Washington. Face-to-face meetings produce more expeditious and wiser decisions than is possible through the written word. When most of our Embassies are within twenty-four hours from Washington, the time consumed in travel is negligible, as compared to that saved through endless and at times inconclusive correspondence. In addition, there should be more travel between Embassies within regions. There is a disease known as localitis which is almost impossible to protect against in long periods of isolation. Discussions between Ambassadors having overlapping or conflicting problems lead to much better understanding and better actions in the field.

In closing, I would like to refer to what I said to this Subcommittee when I was a private citizen:

"...If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the liberty of suggesting that this Subcommittee inquire into the problem of how a Secretary of State can discharge his obligations to the Congress effectively, yet with less time-consuming burdens...It is not merely the time he spends testifying, but also the time needed to prepare himself to answer any conceivable question that may come up...

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He must of course be available to the Congress when needed..."

I recognize that this is a matter for the Congress to determine.

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